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ABSTRACT

Occupational stress situations are those in which characteristics of, or events related to, the workplace lead to individuals' ill health or welfare. One of the basic issues in the occupational stress domain concerns coping, or ways in which the individual can attempt to deal with the job stressors to ward off the aversive strains. As a part of a larger study on occupational stress, this study examined coping in 177 police officers and their spouses. Measures of coping and outcomes of strain were administered. The results indicated that there appeared to be five coping activities in which police and their spouses engage when they experience stress: problem-focused coping, rugged individualism, avoidance, religion, and self-blame. While the first one appeared to be obviously problem-focused, in the terms of the problem-focused and emotion-focused dichotomy, the others seemed more likely to be emotion-focused. There was a negative relationship between avoidance and strains among the police officers. Spouses tended to use the same coping activities for three of the five coping strategies: problem-focused, avoidance, and religion. The divorce potential reported by the officers and by the spouses were strongly correlated, lending confidence in the validity of the data. (ABL)

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Occupational Stress:
Coping of Police and Their Spouses

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Occupational Stress:

Coping of Police and Their Spouses

Occupational stress situations are those in which characteristics of, or events related to, the workplace lead to individuals' ill health or welfare. These environmental job situations are often labeled stressors, and the employees' reactions have been labeled strains. One of the basic issues in the occupational stress domain concerns coping, or ways in which the individual can attempt to deal with the job stressors to ward off the aversive strains.

The theoretical and empirical literature on coping is more extensive in stress research domains other than job or occupational stress, particularly in the so-called life stress domain. Even in that more extensive literature, there is no clear agreement regarding the types of activities that constitute coping (Kessler, Price, & Wortman, 1985). As noted by Kessler, et al., even in the life stress research literature there have only been a handful of studies of coping and stress conducted with "normal" populations (as opposed to clinical populations). Regarding coping with general life stress, "despite the enthusiasm and interest that have been shown for the construct of coping, we have just barely begun to scratch the surface" (Kessler, et al., 1985, p. 559). Regarding coping with occupational stress, we know even less at present.

In an effort to consider the occupational stress and coping activities in a more complete and realistic way than has been

done before, we examined both workers' and their spouses' stress-related responses. Occupational stress studies in the past have not done this, in spite of occasional calls for a more complete examination of employees' work and non-work situations in order to understand their work-related responses (e.g., Zedeck, 19). Payne, Jick, & Burke (1982), for example, have alluded to a needed research focus on the spouses of people in stressful occupations. The present study investigates several issues related to coping in a normal population of people employed in an purportedy stressful occupation, police officers (e.g., Gaines & Jermier, 1983; Kaufmann & Beehr, 1989). In addition, the stress- and coping-related activities of these employees' spouses were studied .

The Structure of Coping with Occupational Stress

The first issue concerns the nature or types of coping activities in which people engage when confronted with occupational stress. The few previous occupational stress coping studies cannot be said to have resolved this issue, but it has been noted (e.g., Dewe & Guest, 1990) that one of the most popular typologies is the problem-focused and emotion-focused dichotomy identified by Lazarus and his colleagues (e.g., Lazarus, 1966; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). It also has the advantage of parsimony, because it is probably the simplest typology.

Problem-focused coping consists of activities aimed at managing and improving the stressful situation or stressor, while

emotion-focused coping is evident when the person attempts to reduce directly the emotional strain experienced. This dichotomy is perhaps both the simplest and best-known typology of coping activities. Although the lack of consensus in the literature led us to develop empirical measures of coping based on the preliminary discussions with people in the occupation being studied, we interpreted the coping activities discovered in this study according to this well-known dichotomy.

One particular coping activity examined in the present study is the employee's use of religion. Glasgow (1986) mentions this as a potential coping strategy, but it has been entirely ignored in the research on coping with occupational stress. Activities that are mystical, such as meditation, have been studied for potential coping success (Frew, 1974), and activities with the trappings of science such as relaxation training and biofeedback (e.g., Ganster, Mayes, Sime, & Tharp, 1982) have been noted for a long time in the job stress research literature for their potential strain-reducing effects. Religion, a topic far better known and more often engaged in by employees, has been ignored, however. One might surmise that this is due to it being a somewhat taboo topic for research and even discussion. Yet it is easy to argue that some religious activities could have a soothing and comforting effect on people. Therefore, turning to religion was included in the present study as a potential coping strategy.

Meditation, relaxation, and biofeedback are more likely than

religion to be used as treatments implemented by third party professionals, sometimes with the support of the employer. Thus, experts in these techniques might be hired, paid either by the employer or employee, to rid the stressed employees of the aversive conseqeunces of their occupational stress. These might not, therefore, be coping techniques of the employee, strictly speaking. Religion, on the other hand, is more likely to be a coping activity than a treatment implemented by the employer. In fact, an employer promoting religion to employees for purposes of reducing occupational stress is not likely to be acceptable in our society. The employee himself or herself is the one to implement this strategy, consistent with most definitions of coping.

The Potential Effectiveness of Various Coping Activities

The basic premise of coping is that it consists of activities with the potential for, or in which the person engages with the intent of, reducing the negative effects of stress. Some types of coping are more likely than others to be successful at this, however. It has been noted that there is a bias in the literature favoring the effectiveness of problem-focused coping activities, but there is little evidence to support or discredit this bias (Kuhlmann, 1990; Menaghan & Merves, 1984). Again within the domain of occupational stress in particular, this is also very true. This was a second issue addressed here.

Relationships between Coping Activities of Employees and their Spouses

Coping activities of employees experiencing job-related stress, like any behavior, can be promoted or constrained by other important people in the immediate environment. In particular, it is possible that coping activities of one spouse are related to the coping activities of the other. A systems theory perspective suggests that these would not be independent activities. Therefore if one seeks to understand the coping activities of an employee experiencing job stress, a larger perspective might be valuable.

A birds-of-a-feather, selection type of hypothesis, for example, might propose that spouses will tend to use similar coping strategies when they encounter stress. On the other hand, it seems just as likely that behaviors of such closely interacting people become complementary in some ways. It is possible that complementary roles are played, for example in which one spouse becomes the more active or stronger person and the other the more passive or weaker one. The stronger person will keep a stiff upper lip under stress, perhaps dealing with it head on (choosing a problem-focused strategy), while the weaker one will become more emotional and engage in emotion-oriented strategies. The dependent nature of intact couples' behaviors seems to suggest potential relationships between their typical coping activities, but it is currenlty unknown how an employees' coping responses might be part of a larger set of coping

behaviors in which a couple engages.

The Potential Effects of the Coping Activities of the Employee on the Spouse and Vice-Versa

Conceiving the employee and the spouse as a system also suggests that the coping activities of one might affect the strains of the other. The employee's own coping attempts might be less effective (or more) because of the activities in which the spouse is engaging. One scenario would find the employee's seemingly wise coping activities not effective in dealing with his or her occupational stress because of the spouses' simultaneously engaged coping activities. Examination of the employees' activities alone would promote an incomplete picture of the occupational stress situation. Again, there is no previous empirical research on to topic on which to draw conclusions.

Method

Sample

A large city police department in the Eastern US and a suburban county department in the same state provided voluntary participants for the study. In the county, all 540 patrol officers and sergeants on the roster were sampled. Three hundred eleven responded for a response rate of 58%. Nearly all (439) of their spouses were included in the sample (a few officers requested that we not include their spouses), and 282 responded for a response rate of 64%.

The city department was much larger and was sampled

differently. Female and black officers comprised minorities in the department, and in order to obtain a large enough sample for some analyses in the larger study, they were "oversampled." A total of 735 officers were selected randomly (except for the 226 female officers, all of whom were included), and 368 responded for a 50 % response rate. Then all 279 black officers were included in a supplementary one-time mailing made on the researchers' behalf by a black officers' organization. Forty-six (17%) more officers in the black supplementary sample responded, yielding a final number of 728 officers in both sites. In the city department, there were 441 spouses in the sample, and 197 responded for a response rate of 45%. Thus, there were a total of 479 spouses in the data.

The present study, however, focused on a unique subset of the married officers and their spouses. In order to assure security of the officers' identities the questionnaires were anonymous, and there was no direct way of matching each officer's questionnaire with his or her spouse's questionnaire. By examining responses to specific key biodata questions on the questionnaires of spouses and those officers who reported that they were married, however, matches of officers and their spouses were possible for 177 couples.

The biodata questions on which matches were required were (1) numbers of children broken down by their sexes, currently living with the respondent, (2) ages of children currently living with the respondent, (3) the officer's parents being divorced

and the spouse reporting that his/her spouse's parents were divorced, (4) the educational level of the officer and the spouse's report of his/her spouse's educational level, (5) the data of marriage as reported by both officer and spouse, and (6) the officer's age and the spouse's report of his/her spouse's data of birth. When only one married officer and only one spouse had identical answers on all of these questions, they were considered to be a match, that is to be married to each other. These matched and married couples comprised the data for most of the present study. Even though these couples could be matched with a high degree of certainty, they still retained their anonymity; that is, the researchers had no way of knowing the identities of either person.

The couples had been married for an average of 7.5 years (SD=5.1 years). Demographics of the matched police and their spouses are in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

Procedures

All policer officer questionnaires were administered through departmental mail, and all spouse questionnaires were administered via mail to their homes. The questions on the spouse questionnaire were identical or as closely parallel to those on the police questionnaire as possible for all relevant questions. Questions on the police questionnaire with no

possible parallel on the spouse questionnaire were omitted from the spouse questionnaire. There were two versions of the questionnaire for police officers, and the officers were randomly assigned to one or the other.

The only difference to the two police questionnaires was the short vignette lead-in to the questions about potential coping activities. The vignette described a stressful situation that might be common to these officers. In survey research about coping, it has been recommended that reports of coping activities be made in response to stressor stimuli such as these; research measuring activities that could be coping but that are not clearly elicited in response to stressors leads to particularly ambiguous results (e.g., REFERENCE).

Half of the married officers described their coping activities in response to a vignette describing a potentially stressful work situation, and the other half answered the same items in response to a vignette describing a combination of work and home stressors. The spouses all responded to a vignette somewhat paralleling the second vignette. That is, a situation is described in which both the officer and spouse have had difficult days and the spouse has things that demand the officer's immediate attention even though the officer does not want to be bothered by them.

Measures

Coping. Discussions about people's coping strategies assume that coping is often intentional (e.g., Schuler, 1985). Lazarus

and others (e.g., Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus, 1966) argue, for example, that people appraise their situation before implementing coping strategies. Consistent with this, research has usually assumed that people are at least aware of their coping activities (Kessler, et al., 1985). Because of this and because some coping activities are not easily knowable by others (i.e., they are intra-psychic; Dewe & Guest, 1990), self-reports of coping seem appropriate.

The coping items are displayed in abbreviated form in the factor analysis tables for police (Table 4) and spouses (Table 3). They were answered on a seven-point, "never" to "always" scale. Five coping measures were formed by taking the means of the items for each index for both police and spouses, and they were labeled problem-focused (M=4.68, 4.49; SD=.99, 1.10; alpha=.66, .64 for police and spouses, respectively), avoidance (M=4.29, 3.99; SD=.93, 1.11; alpha=.63, .71 for police and spouses, respectively), rugged individualism (M=4.49, 4.27; SD=1.27, 1.49; alpha=.51, .42) for police and spouses, respectively), turning to religion (M=3.13, 3.28; SD=1.67, 1.89; alpha=.91, .91 for police and spouses, respectively), and self-blame (M=3.72, 3.65; SD=1.05, 1.23; alpha=.45, .65, for police and spouses, respectively).

Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here

Outcomes or strains. Police questionnaires measured nine

potential stress outcome or strain variables: assignment satisfaction, experienced stress, suicide thoughts, drinking, divorce potential, somatic complaints, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, and somatic complaints. Two of these are particularly new in research on occupational stress, although they have been discussed in the popular press as outcomes of occupational stress: suicide and divorce. As with religion as a coping technique, these may have been considered off-limits or taboo by past job stress researchers, but they are potentially valuable outcome variables in the present study. The use of employees' spouses as second respondents allows an independent assessment of the divorce potential of these couples, and the likely existence of weapons in the home (officers' service revolvers, if not their own weapons in addition) make suicide especially easy to implement.

Assignment satisfaction (M=3.55, SD=1.42, alpha=.41) was the mean of responses to two items: "All in all, how satisfied are you with...current assignment," and "All in all, how satisfied are you with...promotional opportunities," answered on a seven-point, "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied" scale.

All of the other police stress outcomes were measured on the seven-point, "never" to "always" scale. Experienced stress (M=4.18, SD=1.13, alpha=.57) was the mean of responses to three items: "How often during the last 6 months have you experienced stress from:" "the department," "the street," and "home." Suicide thoughts (M=1.56, SD=1.07) were measured by the item,

"During the last six months how often have you thought about committing suicide. Drinking behavior (M=1.98, SD=1.33, alpha=.83) was measured by the mean of three items: "During the last six months how often" followed by "did you ever worry or feel guilty about your alcohol consumption," "did you ever drink more than you planned," and "did you have periods when you could not remember what happened when you were drinking." Divorce potential (M=2.13, SD=1.05, alpha=.81) was the mean of five items: "How often have yo and your mate seriously suggested the idea of divorce or permanently splitting up since you joined the force," "how often have you discussed divorce or separation with a close friend since joining the force," "Many people wonder whether their marriage/relationship is working out. Have you ever thought your marriage/relationship might be in trouble since you joined the force," "How often have you consulted an attorney about a divorce since you joined the force," and "Overall, how often do you think that things between you and your spouse/mate are going well" (reversed item).

Somatic complaints (M=2.36, SD=.92, alpha=.81) were measured by the responses regarding the frequency of the experience of 14 symptoms during the prior six months. These included troubles with circulatory system, gastrointestinal system, and backache, among others.

Emotional exhaustion (M=3.89, SD=1,36, alpha=.88) and depersonalization (a way of thinking about and treating citizens; M=3.74, SD=1.31, alpha=.87) were measured by the burnout scale of

Maslach and Jackson (1981).

The strain or outcome variables for the spouses were four of those from the police questionnaire, with modification to fit spouses: assignment satisfaction (spouse's satisfaction with the assignment and promotional opportunities of the officer; M=3.57, SD=1.32, alpha=.45), experienced stress (from the officer's work, from the spouse's own work if any, and from the home or family; M=4.10, SD=1.30, alpha=.56), drinking behavior (worrying about alcohol consumption, drinking more than planned, and loss of memory when drinking; M=1.34, SD=.74, alpha=.90), and divorce potential (serious suggestions of divorce, discussion of divorce with a friend, relationship in trouble, consulting an attorney, and overall how things are going; M=2.08, SD=1.19, alpha=.92).

Analyses

Separate principle components factor analyses with oblique rotations were computed for police and their spouses on the the coping items in order to determine the structure of coping activities used. Identical indices for police and spouse coping were then formed and analyzed via correlations and multiple regressions predicting strains or outcomes separately for police and spouses. Hierarchical regressions were computed with problem focused coping entered as the final predictor, because of its theoretically superior properties. This allowed the determination of the effects of problem focused coping after the other four types of coping were accounted for.

In addition to examination of the links between police and

spouses'coping activities with their own strains, the links between police and their spouses' coping activities were examined with correlations and multiple regressions to determine the extent to which the coping activities of married couples were parallel, either by being similar or complementary.

Finally, correlations and multiple regressions also were employed to examine the extent to which one spouses' coping activities might be related to the other spouses' strains.

Results

Structure of Coping Activities

The factor analyses of coping activities of police and spouses were computed on the entire, larger samples because of the relatively limited number of cases (177) in the matched samples. In order to compare coping across the two samples, one aim was to construct identical coping indices for both police and spouses.

Although the sets of coping factors for these two samples were not identical, five of them were conceptually similar. The spouses' factors (Table 3) was slightly cleaner than the police officers' factors, having fewer cross-loadings. In each analysis, six factors were rotated based on their eigenvalues being greater than one. The six factors accounted for almost equal amounts of variance in each sample (56.1% and 56.5% of the cumulative variance for the police and spouses, respectively). For each sample, coping factors labeled problem-focused, avoidance, rugged individiualism, turning to religion, and self-

blame were formed. The other factor in each analysis was difficult to interpret and inconsistent between the two samples. An index based on this factor was not used in further analyses, and it was left unnamed.

Five identical coping indices for the police and spouses were formed from the items indicated by the rectangles in Tables 3 and 4. These five indices were determined by a combination of both factor loadings and rational judgment. Two items that did not load on the same factor in both samples were eliminated, and rational judgments were used to determine the more appropriate index for two other items. These indices were very congruent with the results of the factor analysis of the spouse data and were also congruent with the results of the factor analysis of the police data with the possible exception of the self-blame index.

Table 5 contains the zero-order correlations among all coping and strain variables for both police and spouses.

Insert Table 5 about here

Relation of Coping Strategies to Strains within Police and Spouse Samples

Correlations. As predicted, problem-focused coping was, in general, negatively related to strains among police officers (Table 5). This was the case for the officers' somatic complaints, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and thoughts

of suicide. These were precisely the strains not measured in the spouse sample, however. Problem-focused coping among their spouses was related to assignment satisfaction and divorce potential, both in the expected direction. Problem-focused coping did not appear to be helpful in dealing with drinking or experienced stress in either sample.

Regarding the emotion-focused coping strategies among police, there were a few interesting results also. Rugged individualism, a coping strategy that would seem consistent with the macho police image, was positively related to drinking, perhaps further reinforcing image (Table 5). Contrary to expectations, the two significant correlations with avoidance coping were in the direction indicating that avoidance could have a favorable influence on somatic complaints and thoughts of suicide. The five significant correlations between self-blame as a coping technique and police strains were all in the expected direction, indicating a potential aversive influence on strains.

Problem focused coping strategies of spouses also had potentially good effects on their strains, and the use of religion as a coping strategy was negatively related to drinking behavior and experienced stress (Table 5).

Multiple Regressions. Tables 6 and 7 summarize these results with multiple regressions. In each of these tables, each strain of the police officer or the spouse has been regressed on all of the coping strategies of that person. In Table 6, the police strain predicted most strongly by the coping strategies is

somatic complaints ($R = .38$, $p<.01$), with drinking behavior ($R = .33$, $p<.05$) and depersonalization of citizens ($R = .33$, $p<.05$) next. The officers' use of rugged individualism and self-blame appear to be particularly ineffective coping techniques. Rugged individualism is positively related to drinking behavior and both burnout indices (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization). Self-blame is positively related to experienced stress, somatic complaints, and divorce potential. Only for drinking behavior and somatic complaints did more than one coping technique have a significant effect.

Comparing the multiple R's in Table 6 with the strongest corresponding correlation in Table 5 (i.e., the strongest correlation between one of the strains and a coping strategy with the multiple R between the same strain and all of the coping strategies), it is apparent that there is no increase in strength of the relationship between divorce potential and coping to be obtained by adding multiple coping activities over the single best one, self-blame ($r=.28$ in Table 5; $R=.29$ in Table 6). There is some increase in predictive power obtained, however, by adding multiple coping strategies for the prediction of police drinking behaviors, somatic complaints, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and suicide thoughts.

Regarding the regressions of the spouses'strains on their own coping techniques, Table 7 shows that, in contrast to the results for the police officers, none of the multiple regressions were significant. Consistent with their correlations, the

relationships of problem-focused coping and divorce potential and of religion with drinking were negative, however.

Overall, the regressions were not very supportive of the idea that the spouses use multiple coping activities that can have additive effects on their strains, but this effect did appear possible for the police officers.

Relations between Coping Strategies Used by Police and Spouses

Table 5 also shows the correlations between the coping strategies of police and those of their spouses. Of these 25 correlations, five are significant. The pattern of the significant correlations is striking. Three of the five correlations on the diagonal, that is correlations between police coping strategies and the same spouse strategies, were significant, while the number of significant off-diagonal correlations was no more than would be expected by chance (only one of the 20 off-diagonal correlations was significant). This supports the idea that a police officer and his or her spouse do tend to cope in the same manner rather than in complementary manners.

Relations between One Spouse's Coping Strategies and the Other Spouse's Strains

Spouses' Strains and Officers' Coping Strategies. There were only a few significant correlations between spouses' strains and the officers' coping strategies (Table 5). Police using problem-focused coping had spouses who reported being more satisfied with the officers' assignment, and police using

religion as a coping strategy had spouses who drank less and experienced less stress. All of these relationships were in the direction consistent with the contention that officers' coping techniques might have beneficial effects on spouses.

Table 8 contains multiple regression results of the same data. None of the multiple regressions were significant, and it is unlikely that the police officers' use of multiple coping strategies would have greater effects on spouses' strains than the single best coping predictor alone.

Officers' Strains and Spouses' Coping Strategies. Eight of the forty correlations between police officers' strains and their spouses' coping strategies were significant (Table 5). Spouses' use of religion for coping was related to more officers' strains than any other coping strategy. Spouses' use of religion to cope with their own stress was negatively related the officers' experienced stress, divorce potential, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization. Spouses' use of problem-focused coping strategies was negatively related to police ratings of divorce potential and police thoughts about suicide. Spouses' use of avoidance in order to cope with stress was positively related to officers' somatic complaints.

Table 9 contains multiple regression results for the same relationships. Three of the eight multiple regressions were significant, those with combinations of spouses' coping activities predicting officers' ratings of divorced potential, somatic complaints, and emotional exhaustion. All three of these

multiple R's appear to be stronger than the single strongest correlation between the corresponding officer strain any one of the spouses' coping strategies (Table 5), supporting the idea that multiple coping strategies by spouses might have stronger effects on officers' strains than any single spouse coping strategy.

It is important to note that both of the spouse coping strategies with significant effects on officers' strains (avoidance and rugged individualism) were related in a manner suggesting that they might make the officers' somatic symptoms worse rather than better. Furthermore, of these, spouses' use of rugged individualism did not have a significant zero-order relationship with somatic complaints (Table 5). It only had an effect on somatic complaints when the effects of the other spouse coping strategies were controlled.

Special Issues: Divorce and Suicide as Potential Strains

The relationships of the divorce potential of both police and their spouses and the suicide thoughts of the officers were not delineated any better by the multiple regressions than by the zero-order correlations; therefore, the results in Table 5 are the focus of this section.

Divorce Potential. The divorce potential of police officers was positively related to their own use of self-blame as a coping technique, while the divorce potential as rated by the spouses was negatively related to their own use of problem-coping. The spouses' ratings of divorce potential was not related to any

coping strategy by police, while the divorce potential as rated by police was negatively related to problem-focused coping and religion of spouses. Overall, problem-focused coping of spouses appeared to have the most consistent potential to reduce the divorce potential of these couples.

The divorce potential ratings of police officers were related to every strain of both police and spouses, perhaps indicating that it is part of a syndrome of strain that transcends the individual to the intact couple. There was strong agreement between the spouse and officer regarding the likelihood of divorce (r=.58), probably indicating some validity for this rating. The divorce potential ratings of spouses were fairly strongly related to their own experienced stress (r=.44), but not to the other spouse strains. It was related to half of the officers' strains.

Suicide Thoughts. Police officers' thoughts about committing suicide were related only to two of their coping strategies, problem-focused and avoidance coping (Table 5). In both cases, the relationships were negative, consistent with the idea that these forms of coping by officers might reduce their tendencies to consider suicide. Officers' thoughts of suicide were also relaated to one spouse coping strategy, problem-focused coping.

Suicide thoughts were related to all of the officers' other strains, the strongest relationship being with emotional exhaustion (r=.40), and the weakest with somatic complaints

(r=.17).

Strikingly but quite unexpectedly, the strongest relationship the officers' suicide thoughts had with any other variable was with spouses' satisfaction with the officers' current assignment (r=.59).

Special Issues: Religion as a Potential Coping Strategy

Police officer and spouse uses of religion in coping with stressful situations tend to go together (r=.42; Table 5). This could be a result of the natural selection of mates who share similar religious tendencies. For both the officer and the spouse, the use of religion as a coping technique was positively related to the uses of two other coping techniques by these people, problem-focused and avoidance coping. In addition, for police officers only, it was related to their use of rugged individualism as a coping technique.

The use of religion by police officers seemed to have no possible effect on their own strains, because it was not related to any of them (Table 5). The spouses' use of religion for coping, however, was related to half of the strains of both officers and spouses (four of the eight officers' strains and two of the four spouse strains). Thus, religion as a coping strategy appeared to have its potential effectiveness only when spouses used it and not when the police officers used it.

Discussion

There appeared to be five coping activities in which police and their spouses engage when they experience stress: problem-

focused coping, rugged individualism, avoidance, religion, and self-blame. While the first one appeared to be obviously problem focused, in the terms of the problem-focused and emotion-focused dichomoty, the others seem more likely to be emotion-focused.

The preference for problem-focused strategies that sometimes seems advocated was not entirely supported by the data. While one's problem-focused coping activities tended to be negatively related to one's strains (indicating potentially successful coping), so were some of the emotion-focused activities. A particularly surprising relationship was negative one between avoidance and strains among the police officers. This suggests that avoidance of thinking about the stressful occupational situation might be useful in dealing with the strain.

Religion seemed to have no effect, one way or the other, on the police officers' strains. Aside from avoidance and religion, the officers' other emotion-focused coping strategies (rugged individualism and self-blame) had the expected positive relationships with strains, suggesting they might make things worse rather than better. Rugged individualism was an especially interesting coping technique, considering the present sample, police officers. One would expect the police culture to attract and promote this type of coping, but its only potential effect was on the officers' drinking behaviors, and the positive relationship there suggested that the officers who used rugged individualism tended to drink even more than those who did not. Thus, this coping style might actually be negative.

The spouses' coping activities do not appear to have the same effects on their strains as the officers' coping techniques have on their own strains. The data are consistent with the idea that problem-focused coping by the spouse reduces the divorce potential, and that the use of religion reduces the likelihood of the spouse drinking and reporting experienced stress. What works for one spouse does not necessasrily work for the other. Therefore, there is little reason for spouses to use the same coping activities.

In spite of this, the spouses do tend to use the same coping acitivities. This appeared to be true for three of the five coping strategies: problem-focused strategies, avoidance, and religion. This fits with the birds-of-a-feather or selection hypothesis about couples' coping. That is, likes may attract, and people tend to marry those who have similar coping preferences. This cannot, of course, be asserted with certainty, because the alternative interpretation that people start to use similar coping techniques after they live together. That is, people influence each other to react similarly in stressful situations.

Another potential impact of spouses on each other in the family system is concerned with each party's reactions to the others' coping activities. It appears that problem-focused coping by officers might have a positive effect on their spouses' satisfaction with the officers' assignment, and that the spouses' use of problem-focused coping techniques could beneficially

affect three of the officers' strains. Problem-focused coping has often been recommended in as more effective for the person in the long term, and it is therefore good to see that this strategy does not have aversive effects on spouse. In fact, it might even help that person in reducing their own strains.

Regarding the emotion-focused coping acitivites, only the officers' use of religion has the potential to affect spouses' strains, and this was in a beneficial direction—it was associated with less drinking and experienced stress by the spouse. Religion was also the emotion-focused coping activity of the spouse that had potentially beneficial effects on the most officers' strains. The spouses' use of avoidance and rugged individualism, however, were positively related to the officers' somatic complaints and depersonalization respectively, suggesting that the spouses' attempts to avoid their stress might actually make things worse for the officers. Overall, there does appear to be some merit to the idea that one person's coping strategies might affect the others' strains, either beneficially or adversely. The only adverse effects come from some of the emotion-focused coping activities.

Religion, the previously unstudied but probably frequently used coping strategy, emerged very clearly in the factor analysis of coping activities. There was a strong relationship between the officers' use of religion and the spouses' use of relgion for coping, indicating that this coping strategy might be strongly based in the family system and be a mutual or at least a mutually

reinforced activity. While religion as a coping strategy is representative of the perhaps less commonly recommended emotion-focused category of coping, it was generally beneficial when it had effects. Police officers' use of religion appeared to do them no good at all, but it might have helped their spouses. In addition, the spouses use of religion had positive effects on both officers and spouses. More research on religion as a strategy for coping with occupational stress appears warranted.

The other two seldom-researched issues examined here were the potential police officer strains, suicide thoughts for police and divorce potential for both police and spouses. The results for these strains also suggested that they are worth pursuing in future research on occupational stress.

In a study of stress among employees and their spouses, the examination the divorce potential is especially enlightening. The divorce potential reported by the officers and by the spouses were strongly correlated, lending confidence in the validity of the data. Among the officers, no coping strategy had an apparent effect on their divorce potential except for self-blame, and its effect was deleterious. Blaming themselves for stressful problems made it more likely that their marriages were in trouble. Religion as a coping activity might be expected to affect divorce potential because of the close bond between religion and marriage in our culture, but this was not a strong finding. Of the four possible relationships between the use of one of the spouses' usage of religion and one of their reports of

divorce potential, only one was significant. The spouses' use of problem-focused stress coping was negatively related to their divorce potential ratings, indicating that divorce potential might be responsive to this type of coping by the spouse.

The other strain in this study that has not been studied previously in relation to occupational stress, the suicide potential of police officers, appeared to be potentially affected by officers' use of problem-focused coping and one of their emotion-focused coping strategies--avoidance. Its strongest relationship with another variable, however, was unexpected. It was strongly and negatively correlated with the spouses' reports of being satisfied with the officers' current assignment. It is possible that officers with frequent thoughts of suicide might blame their current for their problems, but that their spouses do this even more strongly. The present study could not examine the dynamics behind this relationship, but it appears to be an important area for future research. Overall, the three stress-related topics that are discussed informally and in the popular press all appear to merit more systematic research attention.

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Zedeck, S. (PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT APA IN NEW YORK IN 1988 AND PAPER BASED ON IT).

Table 1. Police Sample Demographics

Males:	161	
Females:	16	
Whites:	167	
Blacks:	7	
Chicano/Mexican-American/Hispanic:	1	
Other:	2	
Age:	M=32.1 years	SD=5.0 years
Years on force:	M=7.9 years	SD=5.1 years
Rank:	Police Officer	161
	Sergeant	14
	Other	2
Salary:	M=$24,342	SD=$6443

Education: M=two-year college degree; 2/3 had between some college and a 4-year college degree.

Table 2. Spouse Sample Demographics

Males: 16

Females: 161

Whites: 169

Blacks: 7

Chicano/Mexican-American/Hispanic: 1

Other: 0

Age: M=30.6 years SD=5.1 years

Education: M=two-year college degree; 2/3 had between some college and a 4-year college degree

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Table 3

Factor Analysis of Spouses' Coping Activities

Item	FACTORS					
	I Problem Focused	II Avoidance	III Rugged Individualism	IV Turn to Religion	V Self-Blame	VI (Unnamed)
Try to figure out what what needs to change and do it	.75	-.05	.08	-.07	-.05	-.03
Try to work it out with the other people involved	.70	-.16	.06	-.02	-.23	-.10
Make a plan of action and follow it	.70	.02	.01	-.15	.22	.10
Avoid getting upset by not thinking about it	-.07	.69	-.06	-.02	.01	-.01
Try to act as if nothing is bothering you	-.17	.67	-.05	-.09	-.15	.02
Look for the silver lining, so to speak; try to look on the bright side of things	.30	.60	.05	-.18	-.08	-.17
Do something that takes your mind of the situation	.11	.54	.04	-.02	-.03	.10
Make it known how you expect to be treated	.09	-.14	.82	-.02	-.09	-.11
Make sure no one pushes you around	-.08	.08	.82	.06	.06	-.03
Do what you have to do for yourself	-.02	.21	.45	.04	.26	.12
Rely on your faith in God to see you through	-.02	.16	.03	-.89	.06	-.07
Think what God would want you to do in this situation	.05	.06	.00	-.90	-.05	.05
Pray or meditate	.05	-.04	-.03	-.89	-.06	.09
Try to please everyone	-.01	.29	.18	.03	-.66	-.18
Hope that if you wait long enough, things will turn out OK	-.21	.35	.01	-.04	-.51	.09

Factor Analysis of Spouses' Coping Activities - continued

Item	FACTORS I Problem Focused	II Rugged Avoidance	III Individualism	IV Turn to Religion	V Self-Blame	VI (Unnamed)
Blame yourself	.11	-.04	-.16	-.06	-.74	.12
Stay away from everyone; you would want to be alone	-.09	-.11	.04	-.01	-.25	.65
Drink	.02	.10	-.03	-.03	.19	.73
Put the situation in perspective so things won't look so bad	.61	.34	-.02	-.13	.18	-.08
Talk to someone about how you are feeling	.23	-.17	.42	-.11	-.08	.06
Laugh it off or joke about it	.29	.30	.03	.23	-.17	.23
Yell and scream at the family or spouse	-.39	-.27	.34	-.04	.23	.24
Eigenvalue	3.87	2.35	2.09	1.83	1.27	1.02
Cumulative percent variance	17.6	28.3	37.8	46.1	51.8	56.5

Table 4

Factor Analysis of Police Coping Activities

Item	FACTORS					
	VI Problem Focused	I Avoidance	IV Rugged Individualism	II Turn to Religion	V Self-Blame	III (Unnamed)
Try to figure out what needs to change and do it	-.47	.24	.14	-.08	.29	-.27
Try to work it out with the other people involved	-.54	.05	-.01	-.01	.13	-.05
Make a plan of action and follow it	-.19	.30	.27	-.04	.07	-.32
Avoid getting upset by not thinking about it	.14	.52	-.12	-.03	.00	-.01
Try to act as if nothing is bothering you	.20	.40	.07	.00	.03	.25
Look for the silver lining, so to speak; try to look on the bright side of things	-.30	.55	-.07	-.12	-.03	.17
Do something that takes your mind off the situation	-.07	.48	.09	.00	-.02	.01
Make it known how you expect to be treated	-.25	-.08	.51	-.14	-.22	-.07
Make sure no one pushes around	.01	.11	.65	-.05	-.26	-.06
Do what you have to do for yourself	-.23	.01	.37	-.02	-.14	.09
Rely on your faith in God to see you through	.03	.05	.00	-.91	-.04	.06
Think what God would want you to do in this situation	.08	.02	-.01	-.88	.05	.02
Pray or meditate	-.01	-.08	.02	-.79	.05	-.01
Try to please everyone	-.09	-.01	-.06	-.01	.33	.45

Factor Analysis of Police Coping Activities - continued

Item	FACTORS					
	VI Problem Focused	I Avoidance	IV Rugged Individualism	II Turn to Religion	V Self-Blame	III (Unnamed)
Hope that if you wait long enough, things will turn out OK	.10	.03	.07	-.01	.03	.59
Blame yourself	-.02	.01	-.08	-.04	.37	.01
Stay away from everyone; you would want to be alone.	.35	-.07	.46	-.01	.21	.06
Drink [and party with other officers]	.02	-.03	.28	.17	.04	.10
Put the situation in perspective so things won't look so bad	-.32	.49	.02	-.03	.04	-.02
Talk to someone about how you are feeling	-.53	-.05	.07	-.10	-.20	.07
Laugh it off or joke about it	-.11	.23	.06	.04	-.09	.47
Yell and scream at the family or spouse	.11	-.25	.26	-.04	.19	.25
Eigenvalue	VI 1.07	I 3.78	IV 1.99	II 2.16	V 1.21	III 2.13
Cumulative percent variance	56.1	17.2	45.7	27.0	51.2	36.7

Table 5. Correlations Among All Variables (N's Vary from 163 to 175)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Police Coping Strategies												
1. Problem-Focused												
2. Avoidance	.30**											
3. Rugged Individualism	.29**	.21**										
4. Religion	.26**	.19**	.15*									
5. Self-Blame	-.22**	.06	-.13	.02								
Police Strains												
6. Assignment Satisfaction	.08	.13	-.02	.13	.08							
7. Drinking	.03	.05	.17**	-.03	-.05	-.21**						
8. Experienced Stress	-.11	-.08	.00	-.06	.17**	-.25**	.16**					
9. Divorce Potential	-.06	-.01	.05	-.08	.28**	-.20**	.27**	.39**				
10. Somatic Complaints	-.18**	-.23**	-.03	-.02	.27**	-.16**	.24**	.48**	.34**			
11. Emotional Exhaustion	-.18**	-.11	.07	-.03	.15*	-.39**	.28**	.54**	.36**	.52**		
12. Depersonalization	-.18**	-.06	.12	-.13	.15*	-.38**	.26**	.43**	.36**	.40**	.65**	
13. Suicide Thoughts	-.21**	-.17**	.02	-.04	.07	-.36**	24**	.25**	.36**	.17**	.40**	.34**
Spouse Coping Strategies												
14. Problem-focused	.17**	-.01	-.05	.11	-.06	.05	-.08	-.20**	.00	-.08	-.01	-.14*
15. Avoidance	-.06	-.19**	-.01	.07	.02	-.10	.04	.11	.05	.21**	.10	-.09
16. Rugged Individualism	-.08	.05	-.01	-.10	.00	-.08	.00	.02	.01	.07	.10	.14*
17. Religion	.08	-.03	.06	.42**	-.14*	.02	-.04	-.17**	-.14*	-.06	-.21**	-.14*
18. Self-Blame	-.10	-.06	-.04	-.11	-.03	.13	.04	.13	.07	.07	.08	.07
Spouse Strains												
19. Assignment Satisfaction	.19*	.08	-.05	.14	.00	.40**	-.07	-.16*	-.19*	-.08	-.31**	-.18*
20. Drinking	.00	.02	-.08	-.22**	.09	.01	.21**	.22**	.15*	.14*	.09	.09
21. Experienced Stress	.04	.06	.03	-.21**	-.03	.02	.01	.25**	.24**	-.04	.18**	.01
22. Divorce Potential	.09	.10	.09	.05	.14	-.01	.22**	.22**	.58**	.11	.14*	.09

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 5. Correlations Among All Variables (N's Vary from 163 to 175) continued

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
13. Suicide Thoughts continued									
Spouse Coping Strategies									
14. Problem-Focused	-.14*								
15. Avoidance	.10	.04							
16. Rugged Individualism	.07	.11	-.12						
17. Religion	-.12	.21**	.22**	.09					
18. Self-Blame	.02	-.09	.39**	-.04	.08				
Spouse Strains									
19. Assignment Satisfaction	-.59**	.14	-.04	-.06	.09	.05			
20. Drinking	-.01	-.09	.10	.06	-.17**	.09	-.01		
21. Experience Stress	.06	-.03	.01	-.01	-.16**	.11	-.23	.13	
22. Divorce Potential	.03	-.26**	-.02	-.08	-.11	-.01	-.08	.05	.44**

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 6
Multiple Regressions of Police Strains on their Own Coping Strategies

	(Betas)							
Coping Strategies	Assignment Satisfaction	Drinking	Experienced Stress	Divorce Potential	Somatic Complaints	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Suicide Thoughts
Problem-Focused	.06	-.01	-.07	.02	-.08	-.16	-.18	-.20
Avoidance	.09	.09	-.07	-.03	-.25**	-.10	-.10	-.14
Rugged Individualism	-.07	.27**	.10	.10	.11	.18*	.21*	.15
Religion	.10	-.19**	-.04	-.10	.05	.00	-.13	.01
Self-Blame	.08	-.02	.21**	.28**	.28**	.14	.12	.06
Multiple R	.19	.33*	.25	.29*	.38**	.28*	.33*	.28*

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 7
Multiple Regressions of Spouse's Strains on their Own Coping Strategies

	(Betas)			
Coping Strategies	Assignment Satisfaction	Drinking	Experienced Stress	Divorce Potential
Problem-Focused	.14	-.04	.03	-.23**
Avoidance	-.12	.12	-.03	-.02
Rugged Individualism	-.05	-.02	-.04	-.01
Religion	.04	-.20*	-.15	-.08
Self-Blame	.10	.07	.12	-.02
Multiple R	.19	.25	.18	.27

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 8
Multiple Regressions of Spouse's Strains on Police Officers Coping Strategies

	(Betas)			
Coping Strategies	Assignment Satisfaction	Drinking	Experienced Stress	Divorce Potential
Problem-Focused	.18	.12	.10	.09
Avoidance	.02	-.03	.03	-.03
Rugged Individualism	-.09	-.02	-.10	.04
Religion	.10	-.30**	-.22*	-.02
Self-Blame	.03	.10	.06	.18
Multiple R	.23	.30	.24	.18

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 9
Multiple Regressions of Police Strains on Spouses' Coping Strategies

Spouses' Coping Strategies	(Betas)							
	Assignment Satisfaction	Drinking	Experienced Stress	Divorce Potential	Somatic Complaints	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Suicide Thoughts
Problem-Focused	.07	-.06	-.05	-.30**	-.05	-.11	-.02	-.15
Avoidance	-.19	.00	.09	.03	.30**	.17	.11	.09
Rugged Individualism	-.10	.01	-.01	.14	.19*	.17	.19	.05
Religion	.12	-.17	-.22*	-.03	-.08	-.23*	-.15	-.01
Self-Blame	.22*	.02	.09	.05	-.01	.06	.06	.07
Multiple R	.28	.19	.25	.33*	.34*	.35*	.28	.20

*p < .05
**p < .01